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ABSTRACT

One of the largest school districts in the United States hired at least one consulting teacher for each elementary school with a high proportion of low income, minority students. These consulting teachers assisted in the implementation of two academic programs--the All Schools Achieve Program (ASAP) and Systematic Strategy Instruction (SSI). Observation of the consulting teachers in four schools and interviews with teachers and instructional aides who worked with them informed researchers about factors affecting the programs' success, among them that SSI was more highly structured than ASAP, and that SSI consulting teachers received more extensive training. The SSI consulting teachers provided more specific direction and critical feedback to the teachers with whom they worked, and the SSI program proved more successful in encouraging teachers to adopt new strategies, though both programs obtained positive results. The programs seemed to help teachers focus on specific skill areas rather than on broad categorization of students. The findings suggested that although it is crucial to assign someone the responsibility for providing instructional leadership, that person need not be the building principal. It also appeared that additional information about recent research on effective teaching would have been particularly helpful to the consulting teachers. (PGD)

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The Fragile Role of the Instructional Supervisor in School Improvement

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A decade ago, Dan Lortie (1975) wrote that the literature on education was "full of prescriptions, and short on descriptions." In the past 10 years, we have seen a burgeoning of both--an impressive increase in detailed descriptions of effective teaching practices and a few thoughtful approaches towards improving staff development. Unfortunately these have been coupled (especially since the release of A Nation At Risk) with a phenomenal number of mandates, harangues, and hastily developed remedies for school improvement.

For one reason or another, much of the energy has gone into training principals to become instructional leaders. States such as Kentucky, California, and Texas have recently mandated "crash" training for principals in clinical supervision, procedures for evaluation, and/or other aspects of instructional leadership. These mandates and courses are loosely based on the early research of Edmonds (1979), Weber (1971), and Brookover and his colleagues (1979), who described the few truly effective inner city elementary schools as possessing principals who appeared as strong, charismatic instructional leaders with high expectations, and who actively monitored students' progress through the curriculum.

Several years ago, in "The Principal as Instructional Leader: A Second Look," (Gersten, Carnine, and Green, 1982), we argued that one cannot expect these "knights in shining armor" suddenly to emerge. Like Edmonds, we saw a need for an individual knowledgeable in all aspects of the instructional program, and able to support teachers and provide specific help to teachers when problems arose. But unlike Edmonds, we thought this person need not be the principal. In many ways, it seemed that an individual such as a curriculum supervisor, master or mentor teacher, or remedial reading specialist might be more appropriate to perform this function. On the basis of our experience in Project Follow Through, where instructional programs

suceeded despite different, and occasionally antaonistic principals (see Meyer, Gersten, and Gutkin, 1985), we concluded that it is not terribly important who performs these activities, as long as the principal or central administration doesn't actively undermine their work (Berman and McLaughlin, 1977). Often principals are not in the best position to perform many of these activities, because of the other responsibilities which they have (Pinero, 1982; Morris et al, 1981) and their lack of both training and orientation towards instructional concerns (Lortie, 1982).

Subsequent research (Crandall et al, 1982) has tended to support this position. Research on innovation and school improvement conducted in the early eighties tended often to pinpoint a supervisor, facilitator, coordinator who was responsible for the success of the innovation. Rarely was the principal the prime change agent.

Overview of Current Research Project

Around 1982, our research emphasis focused on developing an understanding of how these "facilitators" operate--what type of training is optimal, what problems they face, what sort of support systems enhance or impede their work. We also attempted to document and analyze their day-to-day impact on teachers (and instructional aides). We were less interested in studying "effective" inner city schools than in studying schools attempting to become more effective, because we thought this was the best way to document patterns of effective (and ineffective) instructional management. The site that agreed to participate is one of the 20 largest districts in the country. As part of its school improvement program, the district had hired at least one consulting teacher for each elementary school with a high proportion of low income, minority students. The sole purpose of the consulting teachers was to assist in the implementation of the instructional programs.

The schools operated two distinct academic programs--ASAP and SSI. ASAP (All Schools Achieve Program) is a district-developed program based on principles of mastery learning and the research on time on task and time allocation. Teachers use traditional basal reading and math series; however they follow semi-scripted teachers' guides developed by the district teaching the lessons. The guides highlight selected skills in each lesson. Additional worksheets were developed to provide practice on these skills. There are also ASAP series in Spanish for students in bilingual programs. Students are tested at the end of every unit (approximately once a week), and students who fail to pass the unit test are given a one-day "reteaching" lesson. Other students are provided with enrichment activities. The teachers' rate of progress through the curriculum and allocation of time during the day to basic academic skills are monitored.

If ASAP can be considered a structured approach to teaching, Systematic Strategy Instruction (SSI) must be considered highly structured. In this program teachers use scripted lesson formats oriented towards the type of academic skill being taught. The format guide provides teachers with exact wording to use, and specific procedures for correcting errors, reviewing material, etc. In the SSI classrooms, teacher performance is monitored not only in terms of rate of progress through the curriculum and student performance on unit tests, but also the extent to which teachers are using the teaching procedures (such as immediate correction of student errors or rapid instructional delivery) specified in the manual.

Neither school improvement model is a unique approach to school improvement. What is unusual is the district's decision to hire consulting teachers in each school to assist in the implementation of each model. The consulting teachers have no classroom or "pull out" tutoring responsibilities. Their only role is to assist in the implementation of ASAP

or SSI by a) overseeing appropriate placement of students, b) ensuring that each classroom has the proper materials, c) monitoring teacher implementation of ASAP or SSI, and d) providing technical assistance. There are some ambiguities in the job descriptions provided, and--as will be seen--they were the cause of certain conflicts for the ASAP consulting teachers. The training procedures were quite a bit more extensive for the consulting teachers in the Systematic Strategies Instruction program than in the ASAP program; this affected how they viewed their respective roles.

The focus of this study was an analysis of the role of the consulting teacher and what she or he did to enhance or impede implementation of ASAP or SSI. This was done by extensive observations of the day-to-day operation of the consulting teachers by two individuals with extensive experience as program supervisors, teacher trainers, and educational consultants. The observations followed the mode used by Rowan, Bossert and Dwyer (1982). The observer recorded all the activities seen, but also talked to the consulting teacher to assess such things as her reasons for certain actions or her future plans for a certain activity. A total of 34 days were spent observing the consulting teachers.

Each of the 105 teachers served by the consulting teachers was interviewed. The interview asked specific questions about the monitoring functions of the consulting teacher and the technical assistance and help provided. Teachers were asked to both describe and evaluate the quality of services received, and their sense of the utility of having a consulting teacher. They also discussed the role of the principal in the instructional management process. Six instructional aides from each school were also interviewed.

To gain a richer picture of the context in which the consulting teachers worked, the principals in the four schools were interviewed and

observed for a total of 38 days. The research staff also attended meetings on instructional issues (faculty meetings, team meetings between consulting teachers and principals, and any meetings with central office personnel.) Finally, we observed a random subsample of classrooms to get a sense of implementation of ASAP and SSI in terms of academic engaged time, allocation of time, and student success rate doing independent seatwork.

The study was conducted in four rather large urban schools. In each school, the preponderance of students were low income; 91% qualified for free or reduced lunch. Ninety-three percent of the students were minorities (Black, Latino, or Asian). Each of the schools was fairly large (ranging from 500 to 1150 students). Student mobility rates were extremely high, often as high as 49 percent. This means the average teacher was responsible for 48, rather than 32, students at some time duing the course of a year; the principal might be responsible each year, for 1500, not 1000, students per year. Generally, the overall achievement level of these schools was quite low in reading; average 5th grade scores ranged from the 5th to 22nd percentile on a standarized achievement test. Math performance was adequate, ranging from the 39th to 61st percentile. There was some evidence of improvement in achievement over the past years due to ASAP and SSI. Three of the schools had both ASAP and SSI programs; one school had only the ASAP program. Two schools each had a consulting teacher for the Spanish ASAP program as well as one for the English ASAP and the SSI program.

This article will report only the preliminary findings. More extensive analyses of the data are currently being conducted and will be released in the near future (Gersten, Green, Davis, Bourbeau, Darch, Carnine, and Johnson, in preparation). In this paper, we will highlight the findings on the role of the consulting teacher.

We went into the study believing that the core of successful school

improvement is a well trained, responsible instructional leader who is knowledgeable in all details of the instructional program (Gersten and Carnine, 1981; Carnine and Gersten, 1984). We thought the key person was likely to be the consulting teacher(s). We saw the role of the principal as being essentially one of knowledgeable support--of both the consulting teachers and the teaching faculty. On the basis of the findings of this study, we see no reason to revise our views, but, watching this model in operation, we do see some definite directions for other interested school districts to follow and some clear areas for potential failure.

Observations on the Role of the Consulting Teacher

Positive Aspects

In 1978, prior to the impelementation of the programs the senior author observed classrooms in several of these schools. The contrast between 1983 and 1978 was dramatic, and largely due to ASAP and SSI. The most dramatic contrast between 1978 and 1983 was the increased allocation of time to academics, a dramatic increase in academic engagement rate. We also saw a concrete move toward students covering as much material each year as their middle class peers, which was certainly not the case five years previously. The monitoring of classrooms by the consulting teachers certainly played a role in these changes. Watching the day-to-day operations of these programs--the incredible amounts of materials that need to be distributed in order to maintain three different reading groups and two math groups in each classroom, including enrichment and remediation materials, the continuous testing of students (many of whom are not proficient in English) who need to be placed or re-placed due to the high mobility rate--it becomes clear that some type of program facilitator is necessary at each of these large schools.

Another striking difference over the five years was the schoolwide

adoption of the principles of mastery learning--not in a formal sense, but in a prosaic, day-to-day sense. Virtually every teacher in the school acted as if she or he were responsible for each child mastering the lesson content. If this didn't happen, teachers discussed the issue with the consulting teacher or their peers or in some cases arranged for grade level meetings. Teachers talked about units or skill sequences that were difficult to teach rather than students who found it difficult to learn. This level of discourse is atypical for elementary schools, and, largely is due to the ASAP and SSI programs as embodied in the consulting teachers.

Research on effective school improvement effort has indicated that visible commitment to the innovation is essential (Gersten, Carnine, and Green, 1982; Purkey and Smith, 1983; Little, 1982). Often, this research suggests that the principal should display the commitment. However, we found consistently that the resource teachers, not the principals, displayed the most visible commitment to the innovation. (Actually, this was true in nine of the ten cases, an extremely high proportion). Typically, the principals supported ASAP often with formal pronouncements; they didn't even bother to pay lip service to Systematic Strategies Instruction. They implemented the former because it was district policy; they often implemented the latter because of additional external (federal) funding, parent preference, and high test scores.

Visible commitment came from consulting teachers, who consistently explained and clarified the program, provided emotional support to teachers trying new procedures, as well as providing materials, and helping with placement. In War and Peace, Tolstoi points out how in the long run the sleepy-eyed, pragmatic General Kutuzov won out over the flamboyant Napoleon, largely by attending to the day-to-day details of supplying the troops with food, supplies, ammunition, and by his patience. In watching the consulting

teachers in action, we were reminded of Kutuzov and of the type of change that had been achieved over the four years.

Limitations in the Performance of the Consulting Teacher

As we came to know the consulting teachers and watched their daily routines and procedures for handling problems, we noted a clear demarcation line identifying the point at which the consulting teachers would intervene. Generally, they felt very comfortable training and correcting the work of instructional aides and substitute teachers new to ASAP. They usually were quite specific and helpful (as assessed by interviews) with teachers new to AGP, again providing guidelines on how to schedule, arrange materials, place students, manage and organize a classroom.

Unwritten Laws and Informal Covenants

On the other hand, there seemed to be an unwritten law--never give feedback to a teacher that may be perceived as critical, unless the teacher violates a specified ASAP procedure. Thus, the only critical feedback teachers received was when their record keeping was sloppy, when their curricular pacing was too slow, when they failed to follow an AGP teaching format, or when they violated a district policy (e.g., letting students do math worksheets during reading time). Except for the two SSI consulting teachers, the ASAP consultants virtually never dealt with specifics of teacher behavior.

Of course, reasons were given. The primary one was that, according to district policy and state law, consulting teachers could not "evaluate" teachers: they could merely provide "help" in the way of technical assistance. Exactly where "assistance" ended, and evaluation began, no one knew. The tendency was to err on the conservative side. Several told

stories of the early years of ASAP, when some teachers threatened to sue the consulting teachers for "evaluating" them, if they provided any suggestions critical of a teacher's classroom behavior. They were told they must respect each teacher's individual teaching strategies and style. Occasionally, however, we observed teachers whose only apparent "strategy" was going over the homework and seatwork in round-robin fashion and then announcing the next day's assignment. Several failed to take time to review or clarify material that was obviously confusing to the students. Some consulting teachers were extremely frustrated by the situation; others accepted this as their fate, occasionally trying to "assist" the principal in working with the few truly weak or disorganized teachers. Often, though not always, these efforts ended in limbo due to the principal's failure to follow through with suggestions made by the consulting teacher.

Another reason for this phenomenon was given by the district office. When asked why the SSI resource teachers gave specific, detailed, and seemingly evaluative feedback and the ASAP resource teachers did not, we were told that giving such feedback would be perceived by teachers as "evaluative" and it would make teachers feel "uncomfortable". Because the district wanted to make sure the new program (ASAP) would be viewed in a favorable light, and that there would be no problems with the teachers' union, consulting teachers were advised, in the beginning stages of implementation, to not give any evaluative feedback to teachers.

The problem of close supervision is hardly unique to this district or state. Whenever serious school improvement efforts are undertaken, this situation is likely to recur. Lortie (1975) and Weick (1976) described the norms of teacher autonomy and equality prevalent in American schools. In a study of resource consultants working with special education students mainstreamed in regular classrooms, Morvant (1984) concluded: "The job of

the resource consultant centers on coordination, collaboration, and consultation with other teachers. Yet the established norms of antonomy and equality of teachers pose a serious barrier to this model."

Though Weick's (1976) description of schools as "loosely structured organizations characterized by multiple goals," loose coupling between means and ends is less true for an ASAP/SSI school than a typical elementary school, much of his analysis still held true. The result was a hampering of the performance of the consulting teachers.

In our observations, we saw the organizational constraints of the position and the inner turmoil that it caused in several of the consulting teachers, who felt limited to the role of material suppliers, monitors, and trainers of instructional aides and subs. A few supplemented these duties by developing innovative approaches for accelerating students who showed academic promise, and in providing emotional support to teachers, especially the newer teachers. Yet, there were definite limits to what they did--and could do--professionally.

We became most aware of this clash when interviewing one of the teachers, actually one of the most competent, motivated teachers we observed. We asked her to describe the type of feedback and technical assistance she received from the consulting teacher. She indicated that years ago she had received a few pointers in teaching the new ASAP math program. "But," she said, "why should anyone give me advice on teaching reading? I've been teaching reading for 13 years and there's very little I don't know." While this attitude may have made sense in her case, the teachers in the majority of classrooms observed could have used feedback on methods to enhance their teaching.

The teachers in these schools had very challenging teaching assignments--a large number of students enter the school with limited

language backgrounds in both the English and Spanish languages. There teachers were in need of knowledge on current research on effective practices, and help in how to transform this knowledge into practice, not because they were weak teachers, but because some of the conventional methods they were trained in don't necessarily work with "at risk" students.

"Another Country"

Within several weeks, we became aware that more than organizational constraint operated on the ASAP consulting teachers. After reviewing our field notes, including the formal interviews and informal discussions based on classroom observations conducted with them throughout the year, an image developed in our minds. In a sense, we felt as if we were, in James Baldwin's phrase, in another country. Not once did we see or hear any awareness of the concepts in any of the classic articles on teacher effectiveness, such as Barak Rosenshine's "Teaching Functions in Instructional Programs" (1983) or Jane Stallings "Beyond Time on Task" (1980) or the recent Brophy and Good (1984) synthesis of research on effective teaching of basic academic skills. It was as if an invisible barrier existed, and these ideas never crossed the threshold of these schools. Granted, lip service was given to the characteristics of effective schools and administrative aspects of research on effective teaching--time on task, time allocation, pacing through the curriculum. And some real strides had been made in the concept of mastery learning. Throughout the four schools, there was a sense that if a child failed a unit mastery test, something must be done (other than merely go on to the next lesson). However, we rarely observed much in the way of reteaching lessons, obstensibly an essential component of mastery learning. Only 2% of the teachers ever received any assistance from the consulting teachers in reteaching the lessons.

By and large, though, none of the subtle findings on effective

teachers, what Stallings (1980) called "Beyond Time On Task," were known or communicated. Issues such as maintaining a high student success rate during a lesson (Fisher et al, 1980; Gersten et al, 1982), providing clear explanations of concepts with several relevant examples, the use of guided practice prior to independent seatwork (Good and Grouws, 1979), the importance of immediately correcting student errors without spending too much time with a student (Stallings, 1975) never came up in the observations.

The last decade has provided some solid research on teaching procedures that enhance the achievement of low income "at risk" students such as these. We came to see that the consulting teachers needed extensive training in understanding these concepts and how they are applied in the classroom. Many of these concepts are not intuitively obvious. For example, we were all taught that good teachers challenge their students, yet research now shows low-performing students need to work at a 90 percent or higher success rate. Similarly, the natural human tendency is to nag the child not paying attention rather than praise the four or five with their eyes on the teacher. As we observed, we became convinced that understanding and implementing these concepts could dramatically raise achievement (Stallings 1980, Anderson et al. 1979, Becker 1977). Extensive training, however, would be necessary. In the next section, we describe some elements essential to that training.

As we observed the consulting teachers in action, we were constantly struck by the type of questions they did <u>not</u> ask, the observations and analyses they did not make. For example, in analyzing an observed lesson, we would almost automatically ask ourselves questions such as:

1. Is the teacher modeling the strategy or process for the students?
2. Are adequate range of examples presented of the new

concept?

3. Does the teacher check for understanding, i.e., see if students have understood the new concept before moving on to the next segment of the lesson?
4. Does the teacher immediately correct student errors, or merely call on another student? If errors are made on complex problems, does the teacher merely give the correct answer or guide the student through the correct strategy?
5. What is the overall student success rate during the lesson? Is it at the 85-90 percent level research suggests is most successful?

In analyzing the notes written by the consulting teachers in the ASAP program, and our conversations with the consulting teachers, we found that questions were virtually never asked.

Sadly, this lack of knowledge of research on principles of effective instruction was not limited to the consulting teachers. Rather, it appeared to be a shared, schoolwide phenomenon. When we attended instructional team meetings involving the principal, the consulting teachers, and the special education and remedial reading facilitators (in the one school that held such meetings), we observed the same lack of knowledge. For example, in one school a meting of the instructional team was held because the kindergarten teachers responsible for bilingual and limited-English-proficient students wanted to retain ("leave back") one third of the students because they "failed to pass" Level One of the Spanish reading program, and thus seemed unable to deal with the first grade reading materials. The teachers reported how they had tried their best to get the "low" students to learn the material--they had grimaced, jumped, even pounded on the floor to help the

students remember the 5 short vowel sounds that constitute Level One. Not one person in the meeting ever expressed an opinion on the curriculum--of how teaching the 5 reasonably similar short vowel sounds in succession is likely to be frustrating, of how teaching all 5 vowels before teaching any consonants deprives the beginning student of gaining a sense of how the seemingly abstract vowels and consonant sounds blend into real words. Nor did anyone show any awareness of the principles for enhancing retention of new material, of distributed practice and cumulative review (rather than the relatively ineffectual techniques of grimacing and jumping up and down). The meeting ended in a stalemate, with the teachers wanting to retain the children, the principal refusing for social-political reasons, but no one learning anything about more effective approaches for teaching the students. This was but one of the many missed opportunities we observed, occasions where knowledge of research on effective instruction could have remedied problems.

Contrast Between ASAP and SSI Consulting Teachers

Up to this point, little has been said about the three consulting teachers in the SSI program. Their behavior, and the nature of their role was dramatically different. Unlike their ASAP colleagues, these individuals did feel comfortable giving teachers specific feedback on their performance. They did, on occasion, take over a reading group and model an alternate approach for a teacher. For example, they would demonstrate how to assess whether all students had mastered a skill before going on to the next section of the lesson.

In the interviews, the teachers indicated they did not mind this type of feedback. Though perceived as awkward at first, most came to appreciate receiving some real, specific feedback on their work. One teacher, who was in the midst of a conflict with her consulting teacher, said: "At least it's

all above board and direct. If a suggestion doesn't work--which sometimes happens--I can always try it for a few days and report to Grace on what happened. If it does work, then things have really improved."

When we queried whether the feedback was perceived as evalautive or critical, many indicated that there were several reasons why this was not so. One teacher indicated that the two consulting teachers she had worked with in the SSI program "practice what they preached . . . They always included positive, as well as negative/critical, feedback. They made a point of following up and looking for any change in the specific areas they pinpointed." In our observations, we noted that the consulting teachers trained in the SSI model tended to

a) phrase feedback/suggestions to teachers in terms of enhancing student performance (e.g. Instead of saying, "Spend more time on the phonics skills section of the lesson," they might say, "If you spend more time on the phonics skills section of the lesson, and check that all students know these skills, story reading will improve.")

b) present the feedback to teachers in small, manageable units, normally focusing on only one area per observation

These principles may seem banal, but they were effective in working cooperatively with teachers and changing specific teaching behaviors.

The question remains--how did these two very different models exist in the same schools in the same district with the same teachers' union? Probably the major reason is SSI began as a small-scale externally-funded program, and, because of the external funding, was somewhat free to develop its own policy. Another reason cited was that SSI was initially so different a way of teaching that many teachers didn't mind receiving "help." We were told that with a model like ASAP, which is much closer to traditional

teaching from a basal reader, teachers were more likely to resist directive "help." Yet ASAP, when properly implemented, did demand quite a bit of change on the teacher's part.

Probably the major reason the SSI model worked was the amount of training and the quality of training given to the consulting teachers. By this point in time, many of the consulting teachers were experts capable of providing specific remedies to instructional problems. Each consulting teacher had served a sort of apprenticeship, working with either an experienced consulting teacher or an outside consultant to learn how to supervise, how to analyze an instructional situation, and how to communicate to teachers. Initially, the new consulting teacher watched the senior person at work and discussed what she saw. At times, the two discussed their observations and analyses, and the senior person indicated why she would work on this skill rather than that skill. In ASAP, the consulting teachers essentially relied on their own experience; the inservice training they received focused on the ASAP procedures. And, as we saw, much of their involvement with teachers was on procedural issues. It was only with aides, or inexperienced teachers, that they felt comfortable providing actual technical assistance.

We don't want to conclude this section by giving the impression that all was well with the SSI program. By and large, the teachers found this intensive type of inservice supervision most helpful the first year or two when they were new to SSI. It was less clear that the model was helping them during the third or fourth year, as some were struggling with more sophisticated issues, such as how to enhance the program in the area of writing or oral language. More could have been done with peer support, including observations of fellow teachers, even using experienced teachers to coach new teachers or aides.

These concerns, though, are relatively minor. The SSI model did meet the need voiced by 67 percent of the ASAP teachers of providing some type of specific feedback on how to enhance their work. In addition, the model did routinely address many of the issues raised in the research on effective teaching.

The conclusion we reached was that without the training offered to the consulting teachers in the SSI program, the model would not have worked. This type of training is fairly unusual in school districts and, on the surface, rather expensive. The coaching model (Showers, 1985) is used in two ways. First, peer coaching as a means of training the new consulting teacher. Second, the more effective SSI consulting teachers used coaching as one of their primary means of working with teachers. If they observed a problem, they took over the group for a few minutes to demonstrate a solution. They told the teacher what they were doing and why, and then asked the teacher to practice the new skill. They returned to observe how the teacher was doing on the skill. This type of coaching needs to be distinguished from the "model lesson," a technique sometimes used in ASAP. Here, the consulting teacher would occasionally teach a full 30 minute lesson (as opposed to a 3-8 minute segment). Model lessons tended to always be one-shot affairs. In the interviews, the new teachers indicated these lessons were useful, they showed how all the pieces fit. But a full 40 percent of the experienced teachers indicated the model lessons were not useful. In the words of one teacher, "She did the lesson just like I had been doing it, right out of the Scott Foresman teachers guide . . . I learned nothing new."

Conclusions

On the basis of this study, one could conclude that, by and large, principles and procedures of instructional management that are clearly

articulated tend to be well implemented, and those instructional management practices that are unclear, either because they are broadly defined, or ill-defined, or very subtle, tend not to be implemented. This can be viewed as either a source of pessimism or of optimism. The reasons for pessimism are obvious. By and large, the ASAP consulting teachers only implemented the "lower order" instructional leadership functions. They all checked that the required charts were up-to-date; most checked if a teacher's rate of progress through the curriculum was slower than that recommended by the district or if a teacher was deviating from the recommended time allocation. Many observed to see if teachers were following the ASAP teachers guides, and discussed major discrepancies with the teacher. On the other hand, rarely was time spent in any of the more subtle areas of instruction--ways to enhance student motivation, strategies for correcting errors, providing clearer models of new concepts to students. Good and Grouws (1979) found the same in their study of staff development in mathematics.

Is there any hope, then for the training and development of individuals who can serve as effective instructional leaders--or at least managers--who can help teachers improve their performance to meet the needs of low-performing or "at risk" students?

The answer, and the source of optimism, lies in the initial observation--what is clear tends to be well implemented. Our findings lead us to believe that if consulting teachers were shown specific models of reteaching lessons, and learned the principles behind these lessons, and were sanctioned to work with teachers in this area, the majority of the consulting teaching would work with teachers on reteaching lessons. Certainly more than the 2 percent we found. Similarly, if the consulting teachers were taught about effective corrective feedback, they would begin to look at teaching situations in this light and begin to provide teachers with useful feedback.

The observations of the SSI consulting teachers would support this view. By and large, they performed in the fashion in which they were trained. With this approach, as with any other, some were more sensitive, more skilled, more communicative than others. But the basic model they operated under was more detailed and exhaustive, more attentive to research findings, as well as more ambitious. This model did not assume everything was ok, but rather that there were areas where specific feedback from a skilled professional could enhance the teacher's professional skill in reaching the students.

The tacit basis of ASAP was that teachers are the instructional experts or that so little is <u>really</u> known about teaching that there's little a consulting teacher can communicate. Phrases like accommodation to teaching styles and teaching strategies are used. When the consulting teachers did offer teachers feedback, they often based it on their own experience and folk wisdom. And while this was useful to the novice teacher, it failed to meet the needs of some of the others. The belief that the teachers' education stops when they receive their credential, that they know everything they need to know about teaching students 3 years below grade level, that they know of research generated 15 years after they received their training, is absurd.

In large part, the district was selected for the study because it had made the commitment to hire consulting teachers to assist and manage the implementation of ASAP and SSI. Despite the limitations we observed, we felt this was a wise decision. In each of the schools studied, we saw the principal was not the appropriate person for the task. The emotional support, material support, and the monitoring functions supplied by the consulting teachers were crucial to the success of the two models.

Teachers rate the helpfulness in their day-to-day teaching activities, of the consulting teachers higher than that of fellow teachers or the principal. Additionally, teachers were asked who they sought help from

when they had questions about instruction. Eighty-six percent indicated they would ask the consulting teacher first. This indicated to us the potential power of the consulting teacher in school improvement efforts even though we did not see their potential fully realized.

In all schools, there was strong evidence that the overwhelming majority of teachers support the ASAP (91 percent) and SSI (95 percent) programs and see real benefits in these programs. The bulk of the teachers appear to find the structure generally helpful to them and to their students. This was especially true for newer teachers.

The principles on which ASAP and SSI are based--teaching to mastery, immediate remediation of student learning problems, active teaching, structured teaching of basic academic skills, and rapid movement through the curriculum--continue to make sense to the large majority of teachers.

One of the most impressive effects of ASAP and SSI is quite subtle and a bit difficult to describe. Essentially, we found the overall level of discourse among teachers and resource teachers, among teachers and instructional aides, and among teachers themselves to be more focused and professional than is typically found in elementary schools. Teachers speak about student problems in terms of the specific skill areas that students are not mastering (e.g., operations with mixed fractions) rather than referring to students by global labels such as "slow learner." This is not to say that teachers never talk about nonacademic issues, but that specific teaching problems and issues are consistently raised. This specificity is, in our view, a cornerstone of school improvement (as the work of Ron Edmonds and Judith Little and others have shown).

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